

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (cancelled)

2. (cancelled)

3. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 29, wherein one of said at least one air channel is positioned to face the spine of a wearer when in use, and is sufficiently deep so as to avoid contact with the spine of said wearer when in use.

4. (cancelled)

5. (cancelled)

6. (cancelled)

7. (cancelled)

8. (cancelled)

9. (cancelled)

10. (cancelled)

11. (cancelled)

12. (cancelled)

13. (cancelled)

14. (cancelled)

15. (cancelled)

16. (cancelled)

17. (currently amended) A backpack, comprising:

a backpack body, said backpack body having a back-facing face, and an away-facing face generally opposed to said back-facing face, said backpack body defining at least one storage compartment having a bottom, a closure member, the backpack being openable by the closure member, wherein a bottom board is positioned at said bottom, wherein said bottom board is at least semi-rigid, wherein said bottom board is angled upwardly in a direction away from said back-facing face, wherein said backpack is configured to maintain said bottom board generally in said direction when said backpack contains a load therein;

at least one shoulder strap connected to said backpack body and extending between a first point proximate the top of the backpack body and a second point proximate the bottom of the backpack body, wherein the second point is adjacent the back-facing face, and wherein said at least one shoulder strap is adapted for mounting said backpack on a wearer; and

at least one side cinch strap positioned at a middle region of the backpack and having a first end fixedly connected to said backpack body for cinching said away-facing face and a second end fixedly connected to said back-facing face for cinching said away-facing face and said back-facing face towards each other;

wherein the backpack further comprises at least one shoulder strap cinch strap connected to said backpack body and extending across the closure member, the shoulder strap cinch strap includes a separation clip that is separable whereby unobstructed access is provided to the storage compartment that is openable by the closure member when the separation clip is separated.

18. (original) A backpack as claimed in claim 17, further comprising a back board positioned on said back-facing face, wherein said back board is at least semi-rigid.

19. (original) A backpack as claimed in claim 17, further comprising a plurality of cushions positioned on said back-facing face, wherein said plurality of cushions are positioned on all regions of said back-facing face that contact the back of said wearer when in use.

20. (cancelled)

21. (cancelled)

22. (previously amended) A backpack, comprising:

a backpack body, said backpack body having a back-facing face, said backpack body defining at least one storage compartment having a bottom, wherein a bottom board is positioned at said bottom, wherein said bottom board is at least semi-rigid, wherein said bottom board is angled upwards in a direction away from said back-facing face, wherein said backpack is configured to maintain said bottom board generally in said direction when said backpack contains a load therein, wherein said backpack body has an away-facing face generally opposed to said back-facing face and wherein the backpack body has a top;

at least one shoulder strap connected to said backpack body, wherein said at least one shoulder strap is adapted for mounting said backpack on a wearer;

at least one shoulder strap cinch strap, wherein the at least one shoulder strap cinch strap has a first point that is on an upper portion of the backpack body and a second point that is on the at least one shoulder, and wherein the at least one shoulder strap cinch strap is adjustable in length and extends over the top; and

at least one side cinch strap positioned at a middle region of the backpack and connected to said backpack body for cinching said away-facing face and said back-facing face towards each other

23. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, further comprising a back board positioned on said back-facing face, wherein said back board is at least semi-rigid.

24. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, wherein the first point of the at least one shoulder strap cinch strap is proximate the away-facing face at the top of the backpack body and wherein, in use, the at least one shoulder strap cinch strap joins to the at least one shoulder strap proximate where the at least one shoulder strap contacts the top of at least one shoulder of a user.

25. (cancelled)

26. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, wherein the backpack body has a zipper thereon, wherein the at least one shoulder strap cinch strap passes over the zipper, and wherein the shoulder strap cinch strap includes a separation clip that is separable to permit the shoulder strap cinch strap to separate into two portions.

27. (cancelled)

28. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, wherein the at least one side cinch strap extends downwards in a direction from said back-facing face towards said away-facing face.

29. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, wherein said back-facing face has at least one air channel defined thereon, wherein said at least one air channel has at least one opening at the periphery of said back-facing face.

30. (previously amended) A backpack, comprising:

- a backpack body having a top, a bottom, a back-facing face and an away-facing face defined by at least a back-facing panel and an away-facing panel, said backpack body defining at least one storage compartment;

- at least one closure member reversibly closing an opening in the top;

- at least one shoulder strap connected to said backpack body, wherein said at least one shoulder strap is adapted for mounting said backpack on a wearer;

- at least one shoulder strap cinch strap, wherein the at least one shoulder strap cinch strap has a first point that is on an upper portion of the backpack body and a second point that is on the at least one shoulder strap and extends over the closure member, wherein the at least one shoulder strap cinch strap is adjustable in length, and wherein the at least one shoulder strap cinch strap comprises a quick release mechanism; and

- at least one side cinch strap positioned at a middle region of the backpack and connected to said backpack body for cinching said away-facing face and said back-facing face towards each other

31. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 30, further comprising a back board positioned on said back-facing face, wherein said back board is at least semi-rigid.

32. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 30, further comprising a plurality of cushions positioned on said back-facing face, wherein said plurality of cushions are positioned on all regions of said back-facing face that contact the back of said wearer when in use.

33. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in 30, wherein a bottom board is positioned at said bottom, wherein said bottom board is angled upwards in a direction away from said back-facing face.

34. (cancelled)

35. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 30, wherein said side cinch strap extends downwards in a direction from said back-facing face towards said away-facing face.

36. (cancelled)

37. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 17, wherein the shoulder strap cinch strap has a first-point that is connected to the backpack body and a second point that is connected to the shoulder strap.

38. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 37, wherein the back-facing face has a top end and the shoulder strap is connected to the back-facing face at a position spaced from the top end of the back-facing face.

39. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 37, wherein the first point of the shoulder strap cinch strap is positioned at least part way towards the away-facing face.

40. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 37, wherein the shoulder strap cinch strap has a length adjustment strap and the length adjustment strap is positioned in front of the wearer when the wearer is wearing the backpack.

41. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, wherein the storage compartment is closeable by a closure member and the first and second ends of the cinch strap are on opposite sides of the closure member.

42. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, wherein the back-facing face has a top end and the shoulder strap is connected to the back-facing face at a position spaced from the top end of the back-facing face.

43. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, wherein the shoulder strap cinch strap has a length adjustment strap and the length adjustment strap is positioned in front of the wearer when the wearer is wearing the backpack.

44. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 30, wherein the back-facing face has a top end and the shoulder strap is connected to the back-facing face at a position spaced from the top end of the back-facing face.

45. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 30, wherein the first point of the shoulder strap cinch strap is positioned at least part way towards the away-facing face.

46. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 30, wherein the shoulder strap cinch strap has a length adjustment strap and the length adjustment strap is positioned in front of the wearer when the wearer is wearing the backpack.

47. (previously amended) A backpack, comprising:

- a backpack body having a top, a bottom, a back-facing face and an away-facing face, said backpack body defining at least one storage compartment;

- a bottom board positioned at said bottom, wherein said bottom board is at least semi-rigid, wherein said bottom board is angled upwards in a direction away from said back-facing face

- a closure member reversibly closing an opening in the backpack body;

- at least one shoulder strap connected to said backpack body and extending between a first point proximate the top of the backpack body and a second point proximate the bottom of the backpack body, wherein the second point is adjacent the back-facing face, and wherein said at least one shoulder strap is adapted for mounting said backpack on a wearer;

- at least one shoulder strap cinch strap extending forwardly over the backpack from a first point that is on the at least one shoulder strap to a second point that is positioned at least part way towards the away-facing face;and

- at least one side cinch strap positioned at a middle region of the backpack and connected to said backpack body for cinching said away-facing face and said back-facing face towards each other.

48. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 47, wherein the back-facing face has a top end and the shoulder strap is connected to the back-facing face at a position spaced from the top end of the back-facing face.

49. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 47, wherein the shoulder strap cinch strap has a length adjustment strap and the length

adjustment strap is positioned in front of the wearer when the wearer is wearing the backpack.

50. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 47 wherein the shoulder strap cinch strap has first and second portions, the first and second portions are separable from each other and the first and second portions are connected to different parts of a quick release mechanism.

51. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 47 wherein the shoulder strap cinch strap extends over the closure member.

52. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 17, wherein the at least one shoulder strap cinch strap is adjustable in length.

53. (previously amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, wherein the at least one shoulder strap extends between a first point proximate the top of the backpack body and a second point proximate the bottom of the backpack body, wherein the second point is adjacent the back-facing face.

54. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 30, wherein the at least one shoulder strap extends between a first end point proximate the top of the backpack body and a second end point proximate the bottom of the backpack body, wherein the second end point is adjacent the back-facing face.

55. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 17, wherein the at least one side cinch strap extends over the closure member and includes a separation clip that is separable to provide unobstructed access to the storage compartment.

56. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 22, wherein the backpack body has a zipper thereon, and wherein the at least one side cinch strap

extends over the zipper and includes a separation clip that is separable to provide unobstructed access to the storage compartment.

57. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 30, wherein the at least on side cinch strap extends over the closure member and includes a separation clip that is separable to provide unobstructed access to the storage compartment.

58. (previously presented) A backpack as claimed in claim 47, wherein the at least on side cinch strap extends over the closure member and includes a separation clip that is separable to provide unobstructed access to the storage compartment.

59. (currently amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 17, wherein the second point is spaced from the awayfront-facing face.

60. (currently amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 53, wherein the second point is adjacent the back-facing face and spaced from the awayfront -facing face.

61. (currently amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 30, wherein the second point is spaced from the awayfront -facing face.

62. (currently amended) A backpack as claimed in claim 47, wherein the second point is spaced from the awayfront -facing face.

63. (new) A backpack as claimed in claim 17, wherein the at least one shoulder strap is contoured to remain generally flat on the body of the wearer along an entire length of contact therewith.